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THE EAST AND THE WEST

Address Delivered at the Banquet given by the
German-Americans of New York in honor of
Grossadmiral von Koester
1909



BY

SETH LOW

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American Association for International Conciliation
Sub-station 84 (501 West 116th Street)
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Monograph*

The Executive Committee of the Association for International Conciliation wish to arouse the interest of the American people in the progress of the movement for promoting international peace and relations of comity and good fellowship between nations. To this end they print and circulate documents giving information as to the progress of these movements, in order that individual citizens, the newspaper press, and organizations of various kinds may have readily available accurate information on these subjects.

For the information of those who are not familiar with the work of the Association for International Conciliation, a list of its publications will be found on page 11.

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THE EAST AND THE WEST

It is a great pleasure to me to be present this evening at the Banquet given by the German-Americans of New York in honor of Grossadmiral von Koester. I am glad to have this opportunity to bear my testimony, as one of the members of the Hudson-Fulton Celebration Commission, to our very high appreciation of the friendly act of the German Emperor in sending as his personal representative to this Celebration the distinguished gentleman who is your guest of honor tonight. The presence of Admiral von Koester has added distinction to the Celebration in all its aspects, and he will take back with him to Germany, as Prince Henry of Prussia did before him, a large measure of the esteem and admiration of the people of New York. We looked upon his appointment as Special Delegate on behalf of Germany, when it was made, as only another evidence of the friendly feeling between Germany and the United States, which has been unbroken, and substantially unruffled, during all our history. Now that we have had the pleasure of meeting Admiral von Koester personally, that which we interpreted at first as a very "friendly act," in the diplomatic sense of the word, we now interpret as an exceedingly friendly act in its personal significance. For the Admiral has charmed by his personality all who have come into contact with him.

Any one who has followed the progress of this Cele-

bration must have been impressed by the large part which has been taken in it by the German-American population of New York. I cannot deny myself the pleasure of saying, Mr. Chairman, in the presence of this company, what everybody knows, that no one has done more than yourself to make this Celebration what it has been. Many others have co-operated, of course, but I think I may say with literal truthfulness, that your enthusiasm, your courage, and your untiring efforts have inspired us all to do better than otherwise we should have done. But beyond all this, which is in a certain sense personal and accidental, it cannot have escaped notice that, whereas the historical parade of Tuesday revealed the cosmopolitan character of the population of New York City, the carnival parade of Saturday evening, which was of equal magnitude, was composed entirely of our fellow-citizens of German, Austrian and German-Swiss descent. Three of the five concerts given for the entertainment of our guests were given by the Liederkranz, the Arion, and the United German Singers, those splendid singing societies which have done so much for the cause of music in the City of New York. In the presence of facts like these, it is easy to believe what we are told, that one-third of the population of New York City has German blood in its veins.

This suggests a fact in connection with the United States which is of the first importance. In most of the countries of the world the citizens or subjects are such because they have been born citizens or subjects; but in the United States a very important per-

centage of the total population are citizens of this country as the result of personal choice. It used to be the rule, "Once a subject, always a subject;" but, largely owing to the influence of the United States, the right of the citizen or subject to change his allegiance is now almost universally admitted. It is because of this fact of personal choice, which underlies so much of our citizenship, that we of the United States would fearlessly trust the honor of our flag to any element of our population, even against the country of their origin, were the misfortune of a great war to overtake us. I can illustrate my thought by an instance drawn from the German-American citizenship of this City. Dr. Abraham Jacobi is one of the Germans who came to this country many years ago as a result of the uprisings in the Fatherland of 1848. Later in life he became so eminent in his specialty of the diseases of children that he received an invitation from the University of Berlin to accept that chair in the Berlin University, an invitation involving the greatest possible honor to its recipient. Dr. Jacobi's reply was, that America had given to him his opportunity; and that, while he valued the invitation as he should, he wished to give the service of his professional skill to the country in which, from choice, he had made his home.

On the other hand, it remains true that, precisely as, for me, England is my Mother Country, so, for the Americans of German descent, Germany is the Fatherland, and all of us Americans, just because we ourselves feel this strong attachment to the country of

our origin, respect and sympathize with the same attachment on the part of our fellow-citizens of different descent. Because this is so, we fondly hope that all fear of serious misunderstanding between the United States and other countries from which our people largely come may be for ever dismissed from mind; because this mutuality of population, if I may call it so, helps to interpret the different nations of the world to us, and us to them. For, among nations as among individuals, good understanding is the basis of good feeling. The fact that here, throughout the length and breadth of the land, our citizens of so many different origins live together on terms of amity and good will, is itself an illustration of what may yet be hoped for among the countries of their diverse origin, as good understanding takes the place of misunderstanding, and good neighborhood takes the place of purely formal relationship.

As a result of the facilities for travel which are characteristic of our day, the nations of the modern world are being brought into contact with each other as never before. President Wheeler, of the University of California, in a recent speech made at the dinner of the American Asiatic Association, pointed out that all of the world lying west of the Hydaspes River, the point which marked the furthest reach of the conquests of Alexander the Great, had developed more or less directly under the influence of the civilization of the Mediterranean, while all of the world lying beyond the Hydaspes—India, China and Japan—had developed, until recently, untouched by that civilization; so that

to-day the East and West are looking into each other's eyes after a development that has been different for century after century; with a different social order, with a different code of morals, with a different literature, with a different religious faith: in a word, with everything different that tends to make individuality in a nation. What will come out of the close contact forced upon both East and West by the developments of modern life it is impossible to foresee;— but this at least is clear, that, if a good understanding is permanently to prevail, it must begin with a recognition of this fundamental difference in training. Such a recognition must take every serious difference in point of view for granted, and both East and West must try to discover, behind these differences in point of view, what is fine and admirable in each other's civilization. Approached in that spirit, it is reasonable to believe that the close contact necessitated between East and West, in our modern times, may prove to be for the advantage of both. If approached in any other spirit, no one can imagine the disastrous consequences that may follow.

What is thus true of the whole West and the whole East is partially true as regards the nations of the West in their relations with each other. The old isolation is gone for ever for every people; and there is no greater obligation upon any nation to-day than to try to understand, and to enter into sympathy with, that which is finest and best in every other nation. I know that out of such new contacts of the nations new differences of interest will appear; and I know that

every nation is ready to contend to the utmost for that which appears to it to be a matter of vital interest. The thought that I wish to present is, that in these days of free intercourse between the people of all nations, the prosperity of every nation is likely to be for the advantage of every other nation. I cannot imagine any greater misfortune that can befall mankind than to have any two of the great nations of the world feel that their interests necessitate a trial of strength with each other. No great nations can fight to-day without involving all the other nations of the world in the consequences of their struggle more directly than ever before. We of the United States, I am confident, may be relied upon to do everything in our power to develop a world public opinion that will powerfully help to maintain the peace of the world. I feel very sure, for example, that the invitation from the German-Americans of New York City to Admiral Seymour and Admiral Hamilton and the officers of the British Fleet to be present this evening at this dinner in honor of Admiral von Koester is no mere compliment, due to the etiquette of the occasion. I believe that it represents the most sincere hope of the German-American population, not only of New York City but of the whole United States, that Germany and England and the United States may always live together on terms of constantly increasing amity and good will.

In 1893 the eminent German physicist, Von Helmholtz, came to America to attend the World's Fair at Chicago. While he was my guest in the City of New

York, Alexander Graham Bell, a Scotchman by birth, an American by adoption, came all the way from Halifax in order to say to Von Helmholtz, as he did in my presence, that the invention of the telephone was made possible by the investigations into the laws of sound which had been made by Von Helmholtz in his German laboratory. The telephone, therefore, invented under the Stars and Stripes, by a man born under the English flag, and made possible by the researches of a German, illustrates happily how these three nations, by working together, can serve mankind. This one invention ought to be the type of all our relationships. Germany and England and the United States each contribute to the civilization of the twentieth century something that is precious that the others cannot give. Springing very largely, though not completely, from the same stock, differences of environment have led to differences of result; and the world will profit most from the prosperity of all.

The things and the forces that are seen are temporal. It is the things and the forces that are not seen that are eternal. The trolley wire attached to loaded cars would soon be snapped if the attempt were made to haul the cars by direct traction; but that same trolley wire can be charged with an invisible force that will move all the cars of a great city, loaded to their utmost capacity. That, it seems to me, is a just illustration of the force of public opinion. It is intangible; it cannot be weighed; it cannot be seen; and yet, more and more, in every country of the world, whatever be its form of government, this intangible public opinion

is becoming the decisive force that shapes the destiny of the peoples. Slowly, if you please, but surely, there is developing a public opinion of the world to the bar of which every nation must come which breaks the peace of the world. My prayer is that the United States, and England, my Mother Country, and Germany, which is your Fatherland, each in its own measure, may help powerfully to develop the public opinion that one day will bring about for all nations that "Pax Humana," which will mean the peace and prosperity of the whole world. This gathering of the Nations at the Hudson-Fulton Celebration ought to be a step, however short, towards this happy consummation.

SETH LOW

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